

Export earnings from shrimp sector increase by 75 pc

By Staff Correspondent

The country's export earnings from frozen shrimp sector have increased by about 75 per cent over the last three years. According to the Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association (BFEEA), the country earned Taka 921 crore by exporting various frozen food items in the last fiscal year 1993-94. Of it, the earnings from frozen shrimp alone is Taka 784 crore. In the fiscal 1990-91, three years ago, the total export earnings from frozen food sector was Taka 523 crore and the contribution of shrimp was Taka 451 crore. The increase in this sector is about 75 per cent, they claimed. "This in-

crease was possible due to introduction of modern method in shrimp cultivation. Under the traditional method, it is difficult to harvest 200 kg shrimp per hectare of land, whereas by using the semi-intensive cultivation system now, our farmers are producing 3000 to 5000 kg shrimps per hectare of land," said Shahidur Rahman, Joint Secretary General of the BFEEA. Talking to The Daily Star, he said Bangladesh could earn more foreign currency from this hundred per cent export-oriented sector, if more land is brought under semi-intensive shrimp cultivation system. "Of the total 1,30,000

hectares of land in the coastal areas of the country suitable for shrimp cultivation, only 150 hectares have so far been brought under it," he pointed out. Besides, there are 1,15,000 hectares of land inside the country which also can be brought under this farming, he added. A commerce ministry official said the government has set up district level committee to boost shrimp production in the country. Besides, a cabinet sub-committee was also set up on management of shrimp cultivation and export, he informed The Daily Star requesting anonymity.



Abdul Momen, Chairman of Pragati Insurance Limited, seen presiding over the Annual General Meeting of the company at its head office in the city on Monday.

Pragati Insurance Limited declares 30 pc dividend

Pragati Insurance Limited has declared a 30 per cent dividend for its shareholders, says a press release. The dividend was announced at the eighth Annual General Meeting of the company held at its head office in the city on Monday. The company Chairman Abdul Momen presided over the meeting. The shareholders expressed their satisfaction at the performance of the company and adopted directors' report and audited accounts for the year 1993. During the year, the company earned a gross premium of Tk 16.84 crore and settled net claim of Tk 2.37 crore. Net profit before tax was Tk 3.23 crore. The company has opened a new window of financial services for its valued clients and has been acting as Trustee to the Debenture holders and Underwriter to public issue of shares. The company's Assets and Reserves as at 31.12.93 were Tk 34.49 crore and Tk 10.57 crore respectively.

'Money isn't root of all happiness'

HONG KONG, Aug 23: Although life is treating the majority of people in East and Southeast Asia fairly well, money is not the root of all happiness, particularly in Japan, a survey showed Monday, reports AFP. Most countries recorded high levels of satisfaction, said survey research group in its recent annual poll based on 9,009 interviews in the between January and March. In all countries in East and Southeast Asia but Japan, at least eight out of 10 people said they were "quite happy" or "very happy." Despite its economic strength, Japan continues to be the least happy country, and things may be getting worse. Those who said they were "somewhat unhappy" rose from 24 per cent to 27 per cent, while a further six per cent said they were "very unhappy." Those in Japan most likely to be "somewhat unhappy" or "very unhappy" are single males aged 20 to 39 on lower than average incomes. The highest levels of satisfaction were found in Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, which all have large numbers who say they are "very happy" — 42 per cent, 41 per cent and 30 per cent respectively. Indonesia, though, has the greatest proportion — 95 per cent — who are either "quite happy" or "very happy." It said in most countries in the region "there appears to be a tendency to expect things to get better, which is not necessarily born out in practice." The survey said there appeared to be a widening gap in the way different socio-economic groups see the future in the Philippines, which is the region's poorest country. Two-thirds of Filipinos expected life to get better, but one in five considered it would get worse, a level of pessimism close to Thailand's. The good news for Filipinos is that slightly more people reported themselves to be "very happy" this year compared with last, and the proportion feeling unhappy also marginally improved.

US economists predict modest inflation

WASHINGTON, Aug 10: Many of America's top economists believe rapid inflation is at most a distant threat and predict this year's increase will be unchanged from 1993's modest 2.7 per cent, reports AP. But they contend rising prices could accelerate dangerously if the economy were to grow too fast, if unemployment fell too far or if capacity utilisation rose too high. The consensus forecast of 50 economists surveyed early this month was unchanged from both June and July and 0.1 percentage point below the 2.8 per cent inflation forecasts from January through May. The 2.7 per cent inflation rate in 1993, as measured by the government's Consumer Price Index, was the smallest since a 1.1 per cent rate in 1986. The monthly survey, released Wednesday, is conducted by Blue Chip Economic Indicators, a Sedona, Ariz, newsletter. The publication said the consensus prediction was that the CPI would rise 3.2 per cent in 1995, down 0.1 percentage point from the June and July surveys and below the level the economists fear would signal rapid acceleration.

While there was a wide range of view, it's the consensus opinion... that a year-over-year rise of 3.4 per cent in the CPI should be considered an "unacceptable upper limit," said Robert J Eggert Sr, an economist who conducts the monthly surveys and edits the newsletter.

IDB president due today

President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Osama Jaafar Faquih arrives today on a 3-day visit to Dhaka, reports UNB. During his stay in the capital the IDB chief is expected to sign two loan agreements with Bangladesh and discuss with government leaders matters relating to bilateral cooperation and international issues. Faquih will call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, LGRD Minister Abdu Salam Talukdar, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar, Religious Affairs Minister Keramat Ali and Energy Minister Mosharraf Hossain. The Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank president will also lay the foundation of the IDB-Bangladesh Islamic Solidarity Educational Building at Agargaon and visit the Islamic Centre for Technical and Vocational Training and Research at Tongi.

Digital phone connection in Ctg by Dec '94

CHITTAGONG, Aug 23: The connection of digital telephone in the port city would be given by December this year reports BSS. This was stated by Chairman of the T and T Board Fazlur Rahman when he paid a courtesy call on city Mayor Alhaj A B M Mahiuddin Chowdhury at the latter's office here yesterday.

The mayor requested the T and T authority to complete the ongoing work on digital line as early as possible. The mayor stressed the need for setting up more card phones in the densely populated and important places of the city. Senior officials of T and T and city corporation were present on the occasion.

Vietnam, Czech sign trade pact

PRAGUE, Aug 23: Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Tran Duc Luong, at the start of a tour of former communist countries in Europe, yesterday signed a pact with the Czech Republic aimed at reviving trade between the once-close allies, reports Reuter. "During the talks, both sides expressed their satisfaction over the definite revival of reciprocal trade relations," a statement by the Czech Finance Ministry said. "At the same time they stated that the current volume of trade ... 10.5 million US dollars in 1993, is at a low level which does not, by far, correspond to either the tradition of mutual relations or to the possibilities of both economies," the statement added. Beyond the agreement, which stipulates trade and payment conditions, the Czech Finance Ministry said a further proposal on mutual protection of investments was being negotiated at experts level.

OPEC basket price falls

VIENNA, Aug 23: The price of the OPEC's basket of seven crudes fell to 16.62 dollars per barrel last week from 17.60 dollars in the second week of August, reports Xinhua. According to the OPEC secretariat, the price of the basket so far this year has averaged 15.19 dollars per barrel. In July, the price had been on a trend of rising and stood at an average of 17.43 dollars per barrel. For 1993 as a whole, the price of the basket averaged 16.33 dollars a barrel.

Oil rigs standing idle amid the gray waves of the Caspian testify to the bleak present of Azerbaijan, a world leader in oil output in the early 1990s. But the crumbling mansions of forgotten oil kings that line the waterfront in Baku are not just monuments to past glory — they also show what massive Western investment could bring. Russia's oil offensive was

Biman plans to procure cargo aircraft

Biman is planning to procure a cargo aircraft in view of increasing "revenue cargoes" for air traffic. The national airlines is also considering to charter a cargo aircraft to meet the demand following sudden rise in volumes of exportables, mainly garments, to be sent by air-freight, a Biman source told UNB yesterday. Biman and 12 other international airlines are now carrying cargoes by their passenger aircrafts to different destinations specially in Europe. The national flag carrier, unable to cope with the situation, has to allow other airlines to operate extra flights for carrying cargoes from Dhaka in the interest of export. "Saudia had sought permission to operate 11 cargo flights

from Dhaka between August 25 and September 10 but Biman issued "no-objection" for only one flight till today (Tuesday) and was trying to procure the business by chartering an aircraft, the source said. Permitted to operate three passenger flights a week from Dhaka, Saudia is now operating one or two extra flights every week to carry cargo. Singapore Airlines is carrying cargo from Dhaka to Brussels and Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is operating with bigger aircraft like 747 to carry cargoes along with passengers. But Biman is facing problem in chartering an aircraft due to the worldwide rising trend of transporting cargoes by air. Different airlines having cargo

aircraft have also increased their charter fare, the source said. The source said Biman had earlier overlooked the freight business giving emphasis on adding more passenger aircraft in its fleet. "But we cannot ignore it any more because cargo carrying will provide more profit to the organisation." A cargo aircraft with 40-ton capacity can carry more than 150 tons of cargo a week. Biman's DC-10 passenger aircraft carried about 25,000 tons of cargo in the last fiscal year against 30,000 tons carried by other airlines. "Biman's Dhaka-Hong Kong route is highly profitable as it carry 40 tons of cargo a week by its two scheduled flights," the source said.

The sudden rise in the air-cargo has also put the garments exporters into trouble. They are facing difficulties in exporting their goods in stipulated time. Taking advantage of the situation, unscrupulous employees in space reservation are asking for big amount of bribe from the clearing and forwarding agents, said a garments buying house owner. A garments exporter suggested that the government declare Bangladesh "open sky" for cargo like Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. "Open sky will enable different airlines having air service agreement with Biman to operate flights without any restriction and help us export our goods in time," he said.



US Ambassador to Bangladesh David N Merrill (extreme right), seen delivering a lecture on investment climate in Bangladesh at the luncheon meeting of American-Bangladesh Economic Forum at Dhaka Sheraton yesterday. — Star photo

IMF, WB to hold 1997 annual meeting in Hong Kong

WASHINGTON, Aug 23: The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank will hold their 1997 annual meeting in Hong Kong, a few months after China is scheduled to take over the British colony, the fund announced Monday, Reports AP. The annual meetings attract government and private bankers from around the world. The Hong Kong sessions are to be September 23-25, 1997. This year's meeting is in Madrid, and the next two are expected to be in Washington. The fund, in a one-paragraph announcement said it has accepted an invitation from the People's Republic of China to host the meeting, and Britain "extended its support for this invitation." The decision provides a strong symbol for China's apparent acceptance of Hong Kong's continuing role as a major international financial centre despite the switch to communist rule. It also reflects

world recognition of China's rapid economic growth and increased trade with other countries. China is due to reclaim its sovereignty over Hong Kong on July 1, 1997, which will be 155 years after Britain got the territory under the Treaty of Nanjing. The transition has been beset by problems. Many arise from uncertainty over how much freedom the communist government in Beijing will permit to a largely Chinese population in a big international financial centre. The bank and fund hold their 1994 annual meeting next month in Madrid, the 50th anniversary of the conference in Bretton Woods, N H that established the two banking institutions. The meetings are expected to deal with ways to help Russia and other countries make the transition from communist rule free-market economies. Low-income countries with heavy debts are expected to renew pleas for reduction of their debts. Both the fund and the bank have more than 170 members, including the United States, Britain, China and the republics that formerly made up the Soviet Union. The decision to meet in Hong Kong was made by the boards of governors of the bank and fund, made up largely of the minister of finance or the head of the central bank from each member country. These ministers and bankers attend the annual meetings, as do top personnel of private banks and other important financial institutions. The World Bank is the world's biggest source of aid, lending more than 20 billion dollars a year to the Third World and to countries formerly under communist rule. Communist-ruled China and Vietnam also receive loans and this year China is the bank's biggest borrower.

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Bangladesh Shilpa Bank organised a press conference at its head office in the city yesterday. It was addressed among others by A T M Alamgir MP, Chairman, Board of Directors, BSB and M Akmal Hossain, Managing Director. — Star photo

Centre for improved technology opens

A centre of improved technology (CIT) has been set up at the premises of Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) here to train and assist the millers in increasing their efficiency of oil milling and processing of pulses in Bangla, desh, reports BSS. Inaugurating the CIT and its training programme at the Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST) of BCSIR yesterday the State Minister for Science and Technology Prof M A Mannan said till now there was no improved technology available here in processing of oilseeds and pulses and to minimise the losses incurred due to inefficient processing and milling operations. Financed by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) this is a joint venture pilot project of the crop diversification programme (CDP) under the Department of Agricultural Marketing, BCSIR, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) and the Bangladesh Oil Mills Association (BOMA) are cooperating with the project. The short-term objective of the CIT is to disseminate appropriate low-cost small and medium-scale oilseed expelling technology to ghani mill operators.

Russian demands complicate multibillion-dollar Azeri oil deal

BAKU, Aug 23: A multibillion-dollar oil deal expected to bring Azerbaijan long-awaited prosperity has run into obstacles from Russia, which wants a stake in the bubbly black riches of the Caspian Sea, reports AP. Russia's demands are threatening to further delay the giant Western project, already stalled for more than a year while Azerbaijan sinks deeper into an economic gloom despite its oil riches. Earlier this year, agreement was reported on most points of a deal to let a consortium led by British Petroleum and Norway's Statoil AS develop two Caspian oil fields off Azerbaijan. They hold an estimated three billion barrels of oil. Then Russia abruptly demanded the right to approve Caspian Sea projects, and said

the interests of other Caspian Sea countries and, in this context, cannot be recognized as lawful." This spelled bad news for Azerbaijan, devastated by a six-year war with neighbouring Armenia over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. Its economy is in ruins, oil production and exports are falling and many people live below the poverty level. Oil rigs standing idle amid the gray waves of the Caspian testify to the bleak present of Azerbaijan, a world leader in oil output in the early 1990s. But the crumbling mansions of forgotten oil kings that line the waterfront in Baku are not just monuments to past glory — they also show what massive Western investment could bring. Russia's oil offensive was

accompanied by peacemaking efforts in Nagorno-Karabakh, complete with an offer to station Russian peacekeepers there. Some Azerbaijani observers said Russia was trying to control the flow of oil to the West. Opposition leaders blasted the two-pronged offensive as a Russian attempt to dominate the former Soviet republics. However, Azerbaijani government officials in Baku say they are not particularly concerned by Karasin's warnings. "I think these statements have no political or judicial meaning," said Hassan Husserly, a top adviser to President Geidar Aliev. "A statement by one person is not an official point of view of the government." Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin has as-

sured Aliev that "the statement was not made in the name of the government," Husserly added. For Husserly, the conflicting voices of Moscow simply reflect lack of coordination within the Russian leadership. Representatives of Western oil companies are confused. They say they are familiar with Chernomyrdin's assurances, but would like something definitive. Oil companies were advised that Aliev discussed that with Chernomyrdin, who advised Azerbaijan this will not be a problem," said Richard Ward, Vice President of Caspian Sea operations for the US marine construction company McDermott. "We don't see it as a major problem but we would like some verification, some official

interpretation, if you wish, from the Russian government," he said. Russia's demands have added to the complexity of oil negotiations, stalled earlier by the war and political instability within Azerbaijan, which has changed presidents — and oil officials — three times in just as many years. In June, yet another round of talks between Azerbaijani and Western oil officials ended in Turkey with many questions about what Russia had in mind but with no conclusive results. The officials signed an agreement, but consortium member Amoco Corp said export pipelines and the status of the Caspian Sea remained unresolved. So for the time being, Azerbaijan's dreams of prosperity will have to wait.

China's largest gas field to start output

BEIJING, Aug 23: China's largest offshore gas field in the South China Sea will begin producing natural gas in 1996, it was announced Tuesday, reports AP. The gas field, located 96 kilometers (60 miles) south of Sanya City on Hainan Island, southern China, is being developed jointly by China National Offshore Oil Corp., a state-run Chinese firm, Arco Co. of the United States and Santa Fe Co. of Kuwait, the official Xinhua News Agency said. The oil field will begin supplying 2.9 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year to Hong Kong and 500 million cubic metres of natural gas per year to Hainan Island from 1996, Xinhua reported.

Wang Hui, an official of Arco (China) Inc. said the field has verified 100 billion cubic metres of reserves. The gas field is expected to operate for 20 years at a total development cost of 1.8 billion dollars. An 800 kilometre (500-mile) submarine pipeline will be laid between the oil field and Hong Kong and a 98 kilometre (61 mile) pipeline will link the field to Hainan Island.

Singapore holds trade talks with Myanmar

BANGKOK, Aug 23: Singapore's Trade and Industry Ministry, Yeo Cheow Tong held talks yesterday with senior Myanmar officials in Yangon, state-run radio Yangon said, reports AFP. Yeo is heading a 51-member delegation, including senior officials and leading businessmen, to the capital of reclusive Myanmar. Yeo called on his Myanmar counterpart, Lieutenant General Tun Kyt, and National Planning and Economic Development Minister, Brigadier General David Abel, the radio said in a broadcast monitored in here. During the meetings, the leaders discussed bilateral economic relations and the foreign investment situation in Myanmar, it added. The Singaporean delegation arrived in Yangon Monday for a five-day official visit, the report said.

S Africa won't sell public enterprises

CAPE TOWN, Aug 23: South Africa yesterday ruled out selling public enterprises to fund the government's flagship post-apartheid Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), reports Reuter. But Jay Naidoo, minister without portfolio responsible for the 37.5 billion rand (10.5 billion US dollars five-year RDP), said under-utilised properties and buildings might be sold. "The public enterprises are playing and will continue to play a vital role in the RDP by providing efficient and affordable services and infrastructure to our people," he told South Africa's new all-race parliament. "Privatisation will not make them more efficient and could result in more expensive electricity, phone calls, water and transport," the former trade union leader said. Business, unions and civic associations would also have a role in implementing the RDP, he added. "Business will have great opportunities as investment increases, but they have a responsibility to keep prices down."